If Truth be Mighty and God All-Powerful, His Children Need Not Fear Disaster Will Follow Freedom As To Science

T was not so very long ago that the profession of teaching was entirely in the hands of theologians. All things secular and sacred, that were taught to young or old, were taught by priests. Priests decided what books should be printed and what not ❧ The priest decided as to what should be taught, and how it should be taught, and beyond him there was no appeal.

Instead of refuting natural science by natural science, theology sought to silence science by citing Scripture.

Galileo, writing in 1610, complains because the theologians would not so much as look through his telescope, but sat back and declared him an "infidel" and an "atheist."

¶ Two popes, Pope Alexander the Seventh

and Pope Urban the Eighth, placed interdicts upon Galileo and forbade his teaching that the earth revolved, under serious penalty. The works of Galileo and Copernicus were forbidden to all good Catholics, and were upon the Index for over two hundred and fifty years, or until the year 1836. For teaching the truths of natural science Bruno was burned alive, and his ashes scattered to the four winds.

The policy of every formal religion has always been to allow the fullest play possible to individuality, and yet not risk the life of the institution. The institution being the important thing—the individual, secondary. This is the idea of society in general, as well as Individuals, however, threaten at times the life of the institution or system, by an excess of strength, and these powerful individuals it has been thought necessary to subdue and suppress. So, when one reads history he notes the fact that in days gone by nations have killed, banished or disgraced their men of genius.

This has always been done with the avowed purpose of protecting the state or the prevailing religious system. Socrates, Pericles, Jesus, Anaxagoras, Aristotle, Savonarola, Copernicus, Galileo, Bruno, Huss, Wycliff, are the types that society has suppressed. ¶ That those who have done the destroying did not know what they were doing is probably very true. In one way they were surely self-deceived—they thought they were working for the good of the state or their religious system, when what they really feared was the curtailment of their own individual power. Men do the things they wish, and absolve their consciences at their convenience. And forever do they deceive themselves as to their motives.

Said Archbishop Ireland, "The enemies of the Church have been inside the Church, not outside of it. The supreme blunders of churchmen have been in suppressing strong men—in thwarting individuality ❧ All the good law and all the good order which the state or Church enjoys to-day may be traced

back over some route to the words and deeds of men, who rebelled against the kind of law and the kind of order that they found administered by its 'constituted guardians;' by men who dared to appeal from the 'keepers of divine truth' to divine truth itself—from the 'trustees of God' to God Himself."

Those who manage religious systems have small faith in a Supreme Being or Universal Order. Luther, left alone, would have soon settled down into a country parson, and his protestantism would have diffused itself in the form of a healthful attenuation. All extremes tend to cure themselves. Well has it been said that Luther retarded civilization a thousand years ❧ It was the absurd and foolish rancor of priests and popes that by opposition lifted Luther into a world-power, and made possible a thousand warring, jarring, quibbling sects and systems, consuming each other, and the time and substance of mankind, in their vacuous and inept theological antics.

Luther prolonged the life of theology by presenting it in a palatable capsule, just at a time when the intelligence of the world was making wry faces getting ready to spew it. ¶ Pope Leo XIII., the wisest man who ever sat in the papal chair, once wrote, "The real enemies of the Church have been those o'er zealous churchmen who have sought to stamp out error by violence, forgetful that man is little and our God is great, and that in His wisdom the Father of all has provided that evil left alone shall soon exhaust itself, and right, of itself, will surely prevail ❧ Impatient defense of our holy religion springs from limitation and lack of faith. Against its avowed enemies the Church stands secure, but against those who are quick to draw the sword and strike off the ear of Malchus, we are often powerless. If the servants of the Church had ever taught by example, through love and patience, even now the reign of our God would be universal, as the flowers of spring carpet the gentle hillside slopes."

These gentle words of Pope Leo lose none of their quality, even when the obvious fact is pointed out that the man who struck off the ear of the high-priest's servant, was the very man who founded the Church.

The reason there are now so few professors to teach theology, is on account of the scarcity of scholars who will pay for being taught. The demand always keeps pace with the supply where salaries and honors are involved. If there were a vast number of people who wanted to be taught alchemy, astrology and palmistry, there would not be wanting teachers to teach these things.

When augury was in vogue and men foretold the future by the flight of birds, in all first-class colleges there were endowed chairs held down by High-Test, Non-Explosive great men learned in the noble science of augury ❧ ❧

If there were now emoluments and honors for teaching alchemy, astrology, palmistry and augury, there would be pedagogic preparatory schools for all of these things,

richly endowed by good men who did not understand them, but assumed that other people did.

The science of theology is the science of episcopopagy. It starts with an assumption and ends in a fog ❧ Nobody ever understood it, but vast numbers have pretended to, because they thought others did. Very slowly we have grown honest, and now the wise man and the good man accepts the doctrine of the unknowable.

Gradually the consensus of intelligence has pushed theology off into the dust-bin of oblivion, with alchemy and astrology.

Theology is not meant to be understood—it is to be believed. A theologian is an ink-fish you can never catch. And in stating this fact I fully appreciate that I am laying myself open to the charge of being a theologian myself.

When a prominent member of congress, of slightly convivial turn, went to sleep on the floor of the House of Representatives, and suddenly awakening, convulsed the

assemblage by loudly demanding, "Where am I at?" he propounded an inquiry that is classic ❧ With the very first glimmering of intelligence, and as far back as history goes, man has always asked that question and three others:

Where am I?
Who am I?
What am I here for?
Where am I going?

A question implies an answer, and so, coeval with the questioner, we find a class of volunteers springing into being whose business it has been to answer.

And as partial payment for answering these questions, the man who answered has exacted a living from the man who asked, also titles, gauds, jewels and obsequies. Further than this, the volunteer who answered has declared himself exempt from all useful labor. This volunteer is our theologian ❧ Walt Whitman has said:

"I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained.

I stand and look at them long and long
They do not sweat and whine about their condition.
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins.
They do not make me sick deciding their duty to God.
Not one is dissatisfied, not one is demented with the mania of owning things.
Not one kneels to another, or to his kind that lived thousands of years ago.
Not one is respectable or unhappy over the whole earth."

But we should note this: Whitman merely wanted to live with animals, he did not desire to become one. He was not willing to forfeit knowledge; and a part of that knowledge was, that man has some things yet to learn from the brute.

Much of man's misery has come from his persistent questioning.

The book of Genesis is certainly right, when it tells us that man's troubles come from his desire to know. The fruit of the tree of

knowledge is bitter, and man's digestive apparatus has been ill-conditioned to assimilate it. But still we are grateful, and good men never forget that it was woman who gave the fruit to man—men learn nothing alone. In the Garden of Eden, with everything supplied, man was an animal, but when he was turned out and had to work, strive, struggle and suffer, he began to grow into something better.

The theologians of the Far East have told us that man's deliverance from the evils of life must come through the killing of desire; we reach Nirvana—rest—through nothingness ❧ But within a decade it has been borne in upon a vast number of thinking men of the world, that deliverance from discontent and sorrow was to be had, not through ceasing to ask questions, but by asking one more ❧ The question is this, "What can I do?"

And having asked the question, we must set to work answering it ourselves.

When man went to work, action removed

the doubt that theory could not solve. ¶ The rushing winds purify the air; only running water is pure; and the holy man, if there be such, is the one who loses himself in persistent, useful effort. The saint is the man who keeps his word and is on time. By working for all, we secure the best results for self, and when we truly work for self, we work for all ¶ The priestly class evolves naturally into being everywhere as man awakens and asks questions. Only the unknown is terrible, says Victor Hugo. We can cope with the known, and at the worst we can overcome the unknown by accepting it. Verestchagin, the great painter, who knew the psychology of war as few men have, and went down to his death gloriously, as he should, on a sinking battleship, once said, "In modern warfare, when man does not see his enemy, the poetry of battle is gone, and man is rendered by the unknown into a quaking coward."

Enveloped in the fog of ignorance every phenomena of nature causes man to quake

and tremble—he wants to know ❧ Fear prompts him to ask, and greed for power, place and pelf, replies.

To succeed beyond the average, is to realize a weakness in humanity and then bank on it. The priest who pacifies is as natural as the fear he seeks to assuage—as natural as man himself.

So the first man is in bondage to his fear, and he exchanges this for bondage to a priest. First, he fears the unknown; second, he fears the priest who has power over the unknown.

Soon the priest becomes a slave to the answers he has conjured forth. He grows to believe what he at first pretended to know. The punishment of every liar is that he eventually believes his lies ❧ The mind of man becomes tinted and subdued to what he works in, like the dyer's hand.

So we have the formula:

Man in bondage to fear.

Man in bondage to a priest.

The priest in bondage to a creed.

Then the priest and his institution become an integral part and parcel of the state, mixed in all of its affairs. The success of the state seems to lie in holding belief intact and stilling all further questions of the people, transferring all doubts to this volunteer class that answers for a consideration.

¶ Naturally the man who does not accept the answers is regarded by the priest as the enemy of the state—that is, the enemy of mankind.

To keep this questioner down has been the chief concern of every religion ❧ And the problem of progress has been to smuggle the newly discovered truth past Cerberus, the priest, by preparing a sop that was to him palatable ❧ From every branch of science, the priest has been routed, save sociology alone. Here he has stubbornly made his last stand, and is saving himself alive by slowly accepting the situation and transforming himself into the promoter of a social club.

The priest is society's walking delegate.

He is the self-appointed business agent of Divinity—and no contract between God and man, man and man, or man and woman, is valid unless ratified by him. All who do not belong to his union are scabs.

¶ The evolution of the race is mirrored in the evolution of the individual. Look back on your own career—your first dawn of thought began in an inquiry, "Who made all this—how did it all happen?"

And theology comes in with a glib explanation: the fairies, dryads, gnomes and gods made everything, and they can do with it all as they please. Later we concentrate all of these personalities in one god, with a devil in competition, and this for a time satisfies

Later, the thought of an arbitrary being dealing out rewards and punishments, grows dim, for we see the regular workings of cause and effect. We begin to talk of energy, the divine essence, and the reign of law. We speak as Matthew Arnold did of a "Power, not ourselves, that makes for

righteousness." But Emerson believed in a Power that was in himself, that made for righteousness.

Metaphysics reaches its highest stage when it affirms, "All is One," "All is Mind," just as theology reaches its highest conception when it becomes monotheistic—having one God and curtailing the personality of the devil to a mere abstraction.

But this does not long satisfy, for we begin to ask, "What is this One?" or "What is Mind?"

Then positivity comes in and says that the highest wisdom lies in knowing that we do not know anything, and never can, concerning a First Cause. All we find is phenomena, and behind phenomena, phenomena.

The laws of nature do not account for the origin of the laws of nature. Spencer's famous chapter on the unknowable defines the limits of human knowledge. And it is worth noting that the one thing which gave most offense in Spencer's work was this doctrine of the unknowable. This, indeed,

forms but a small part of the work of this great man, and if it were all demolished there would still remain his doctrine of the known.

The bitterness of theology toward science arises from the fact that as we find things out, we dispense with the arbitrary hand-made god, and his business agent, the priest.

¶ Men begin by explaining everything, and the explanations given are always for other people. Parents answer the child, not telling him the actual truth, but giving him that which will satisfy—that which he can mentally digest. To say "the fairies brought it" may be all right until the child begins to ask who the fairies are, and wants to be shown one, and then we have to make the somewhat humiliating confession that there are no fairies.

But now we perceive that this mild fabrication in reference to Santa Claus and the fairies, is right and proper mental food for the child. His mind cannot grasp the truth that some things are unknowable; and he

is not sufficiently skilled in the things of the world to become interested in them—he must have a resting place for his thought, and so the fairy tale comes in as an aid to the growing imagination Only this—we place no penalty in disbelief in fairies, nor do we make offers of reward to all who believe that fairies actually exist. Neither do we tell the child that people who believe in fairies are good, and that those who do not are wicked and perverse.

The theological and metaphysical stages are necessary, but the sooner man can be graduated out of them the better. Hate, fear, revenge and doubt are all theological attributes, detrimental to man's best efforts Moral ideas were an afterthought, and really form no part of theology. All beautiful altruistic impulses thrive better when separated from theology.

And the sum of the argument is, that all progress in mind, body and material things has come to man through the study of cause and effect. And just in degree as he

abandoned the study of theology as futile and absurd, and centered on helping himself here and now, has he prospered.

Man's only enemy is himself, and this is on account of his ignorance of this world, and his superstitious belief in another

Our troubles, like diseases, all come from ignorance and weakness, and through our ignorance are we weak and unable to adjust ourselves to better conditions. The more we know of this world the better we think of it, and the better we are able to use it for our advancement.

So far as we can judge, the unknown cause that rules the world by unchanging laws is a movement forward toward happiness, growth, justice, peace and right. Therefore, the scientist, who perceives that all is good when rightly received and rightly understood, is really the priest and holy man—the mediator and explainer of the mysterious. As fast as we understand things they cease to be supernatural. The supernatural is the natural not yet understood. The theo-

logical priest who believes in a God and a Devil is the real modern infidel.

The man of faith is the one who discards all thought of "how it first happened," and fixes his mind on the fact that he is here. The more he studies the conditions that surround him, the greater his faith in the truth that all is well.

If men had turned their attention to humanity, discarding theology, using as much talent, time, money and effort in solving social problems, as they have in trying to wring from the skies the secrets of the unknowable, this world would now be a veritable paradise. It is theology that has barred the entrance to Eden, by diverting the attention of men from this world to another.

¶ All religious denominations now dimly perceive the trend of the times, and are gradually omitting theology from their teachings and taking on ethics and sociology instead. We are evolving theology out and sociology in. Theology has ever been the foe of progress and the enemy of knowl-

edge. It has professed to know all, having a revelation direct from the Creator Himself, and has placed a penalty on all investigation and advancement.

The age of enlightenment will not be here until every church has evolved into a schoolhouse, and every preacher is both a teacher and a pupil.